



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Brunei

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2003](#)

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Brunei Darussalam is a small, wealthy, Islamic country ruled by the same family for over 600 years. A British Protectorate from 1888, it became fully independent and sovereign in 1984. After a failed rebellion in 1962, the then Sultan invoked an article of the Constitution that allowed him to assume emergency powers for 2 years. These powers were renewed regularly, most recently in June 2002 under the present ruler, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah. Although not all the articles of the Constitution were suspended, the state of emergency places few limits on the Sultan's power. The Sultan also serves as Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, Minister of Finance, Chancellor of the national university, Superintendent General of the Royal Brunei Police Force, and Head of the Islamic faith. The Constitution does not specifically provide for an independent judiciary and the Sultan appoints all higher court judges and has the authority to remove them, although he has never done so. The courts appeared to act independently.

The police force and an Internal Security Department report to the Sultan, who maintains control over both.

The country's large oil and natural gas reserves, coupled with its population of 341,000, gave it a high per capita gross domestic product of approximately \$12,500. The Government used its substantial oil and gas revenues and investment income to provide a wide range of services and benefits to citizens, including free schooling and medical care, subsidized housing, and jobs. During the year, the non-oil and gas component of the economy suffered its fifth year of stagnation.

The Government generally respected its citizens' human rights in several areas; however, its record was poor in other areas, particularly with regard to civil liberties. Citizens did not have the right to change the Government, and they generally avoided political activity of any kind because of the official atmosphere of disapproval concerning such activities. Citizens did not exercise freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, or freedom of association. Labor rights were circumscribed and foreign workers sometimes were subjected to exploitation, although the Government took steps to protect foreign workers. Other human rights problems continued, including restrictions on religious freedom. Occasional spousal violence against women remained a problem, although the Government addressed the issue at many levels. Discrimination against women was a problem. In October 2002, a reform nationality law was passed that allows women to pass on their nationality to their children.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of the arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits mistreatment of prisoners, and there were no reports of such mistreatment. Caning is mandatory for 42 drug-related and other criminal offenses, and was included as part of the sentence in 80 percent of criminal convictions. Canings are carried out in the presence of a doctor who has the authority to interrupt for medical reasons. Prison conditions generally met international standards. There was no overcrowding. Juveniles typically served their sentences in adult detention centers but several young offenders were housed at a government welfare center. During the year, construction began on a correctional

facility for young offenders. Male and female offenders were housed separately. Prisoners received regular medical checkups. Remand cells at police stations were Spartan.

Human rights monitors were not reported to have requested prison visits; however, foreign diplomats had consular access to detained nationals. Family members were permitted to visit prisoners and bring food.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The law provides for a prompt judicial determination regarding the validity of an arrest. However, those provisions, like the Constitution itself, may be superseded, either partially or wholly, through invocation of the emergency powers. The Internal Security Act (ISA) permits the Government to detain suspects without trial for renewable 2-year periods. Information on a detainee usually is published only after his release.

Normally a magistrate must endorse a warrant for arrest. On rare occasions, warrants were issued without this endorsement, such as when police were unable to obtain the endorsement in time to prevent the flight of a suspect. Police officers have broad powers to make arrests, without warrants, of persons caught in the physical act of committing a crime.

There were no known arrests for publishing or distributing anti-government literature during the year. However, in the past, the Government has arrested and interned citizens for such activities.

During the year, six individuals were detained for suspected association with a banned Muslim organization, Al-Arqam. In late 2000 and early 2001, the Government used the ISA to detain at least seven Christian citizens, several of whom had converted from Islam, for alleged subversive activities. All were released in 2001. Government officials maintained that the detentions were for security rather than religious reasons (see Section 2.c.). Two of the Muslim converts to Christianity were believed to have reverted to their original faith after undergoing "rehabilitation." Rehabilitation may entail pressure, ceremonial renunciations, or schooling.

There were no reports of political prisoners, but information on possible detainees was very hard to obtain.

Under a colonial-era law, the Sultan may forcibly exile, either permanently or temporarily, any person deemed to be a threat to the safety, peace, or welfare of the country. Since independence there have been no cases of banishment of citizens.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution does not provide specifically for an independent judiciary, but the courts appeared to act independently during the year, and there were no known instances of government interference with the judiciary. All higher court judges are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Sultan.

The judicial system consists of five levels of courts, with final recourse in civil cases available through the Privy Council in London. Procedural safeguards include the right to defense counsel, the right to an interpreter, the right to a speedy trial, and the right to confront accusers.

The civil law, based on English common law, provides citizens with a fair and efficient judicial process. Shari'a (Islamic law) supersedes civil law in some areas, including divorce, inheritance, and some sexual crimes. Shari'a law is not applied to non-Muslims. During the year, lawyers trained in both civil and Shari'a law were working on a proposed alignment of the country's two legal systems into a comprehensive legal code. A "Law Society" (bar association) to promote lawyers' public accountability was established in July. The civil law lacks provisions to allow companies or individuals to sue the Government, which traditionally resolves disputes with generous, non-negotiable settlements, or, in some cases, simply refuses to settle. There is no legal provision to provide affordable legal counsel for poor defendants, except in capital cases. Such defendants may act as their own lawyers in court.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

Civil law permits government intrusion into the privacy of individual persons, families, and homes. However, such intrusion rarely occurred. Shari'a law permits enforcement of "khalwat," an Islamic prohibition on the close proximity of a Muslim and a member of the opposite sex other than a spouse. There were numerous reports of religious enforcement officers entering homes, buildings, and vehicles to detain suspects.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

Under the emergency powers that have been in effect since 1962, the Government restricts significantly freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

In 2001, legislation that codified existing practice further reduced press freedom. Among other restrictions, it requires that the local newspapers obtain operating licenses, as well as prior government approval of foreign editorial staff, journalists, and printers. The law also gives the Government the right to bar distribution of foreign publications and requires distributors of foreign publications to obtain a government permit. The law allows the Government to close a newspaper without prior notice and without showing cause. Journalists deemed to have published or written "false and malicious" reports could be subjected to fines or prison sentences.

Prior to the promulgation of this new law, foreign newspapers or magazines with articles that were found to be objectionable, embarrassing, or critical of the Sultan, the royal family, or the Government were not allowed into the country at times. Magazine articles with a Christian theme reportedly were censored (see Section 2.c.). The growing use of fax machines, the Internet, and access to satellite transmissions made it increasingly difficult to keep such material from entering the country.

The country's largest circulation daily newspaper, the Borneo Bulletin, practiced self-censorship in its choice of topics to avoid angering the Government. However, letters to the editor often included comments critical of the Government's handling of certain social, economic, and environmental issues. The Government on occasion responded to public opinion on some issues concerning social or environmental problems. There was 1 Malay-language press, the Media Permata, which circulated approximately 5,000 newspapers. There was also one Chinese-language newspaper.

In 2002, a second daily English-language newspaper, the News Express, lost a suit for slander and defamation brought against it by a law firm. The company that owned the newspaper declared bankruptcy and closed. The newspaper had featured a letters page where citizens and residents expressed their views and complaints, often about government services and, increasingly, about government policy. The newspapers' willingness to publish these expressions of opinion represented a modest extension of press freedom. Prior to its closure, the Immigration Department raided the newspaper on several occasions; and its management and several workers were subsequently convicted of a number of immigration and labor offenses.

Although the only television station was government owned, three Malaysian television channels were received locally. Two satellite television networks were available, offering a total of 28 different channels, including the Cable News Network, the British Broadcasting Corporation World News, and several entertainment and sports channels.

The Government's tolerance of political criticism was not tested because there was no organized opposition. The English-language newspaper, the Borneo Bulletin, was advised by police not to publish any stories about the activities of the Consumers' Association of Brunei (CAB), a quasi-human rights organization (see Section 4). In the past, the Government arrested those who attempted to propagate unwelcome political views.

Internet use became widespread. During the year, a third Internet board, hosted outside the country, added another avenue through which citizens expressed critical opinions, albeit under pseudonyms. In May, the Internet forum BruneiTalk was blocked for approximately 10 days apparently for discussing business dealings of senior officials. The country's primary Internet service provider was state owned.

The Government generally respected academic freedom; however, some researchers chose to publish from overseas and under a pseudonym when they perceived that subject matter pertaining to the country would not be well received. There were no politically oriented student associations.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Under the emergency powers in effect since 1962, the Government significantly restricts the right to assemble. Freedom to assemble for political purposes was not tested during the year.

Political parties are allowed, but may not engage in "activities that endanger people." Civil servants and security force personnel, who together make up 60 percent of all employed citizens, are not permitted to join political parties. There are two registered parties in the country: The Brunei Solidarity National Party (PPKB) and the Brunei People's Awareness Party (PAKAR). Both parties pledged their support to the Sultan and the system of government, although they criticized administrative deficiencies. During the year, the parties largely were inactive, their few activities often went unpublicized, and they were hindered by membership restrictions.

The country had few nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), all of which were based locally and were generally professional, business or social associations. Any NGO seeking to operate in the country is required to apply for permission under the Companies Act. The activities of international service organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and the Lions, which developed out of the established business community, continued to be restricted by the Government. Religious regulations promulgated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the State Mufti's Office prohibited Muslims from joining these organizations.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution states that "The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafi'ite sect of that religion: Provided that all other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony by the person professing them in any part of Brunei Darussalam." However, the Government routinely restricted the practice of non-Islamic religions and of non-Shafi'i Islamic groups.

The Government investigated and used its internal security apparatus both against persons whom it considered to be purveyors of radical Islam and against non-Muslims who attempted to proselytize. For example, the Islamist Al-Arqam movement and the Bahai faith remained banned. Citizens deemed to have been influenced by "deviant" preaching (usually students returning from overseas study) were assigned to study seminars organized by mainstream Islamic religious leaders. The Ministry of Religious Affairs prepared the weekly Friday sermons delivered in mosques countrywide.

The Government reinforced the legitimacy of the hereditary monarchy and the observance of traditional and Islamic values through a national ideology known as the Melayu Islam Beraja or "Malay Muslim Monarchy." Despite the constitutional provisions providing for the full and unconstrained exercise of religious freedom, the Government routinely restricted the practice of non-Muslim religions by prohibiting proselytizing; occasionally denying entry to foreign clergy or particular priests, bishops, or ministers; banning the importation of religious teaching materials or scriptures such as the Bible; and denying requests to expand, or build new churches, temples, and shrines. There has been a Catholic apostolic prefecture in the country since 1998 headed by an ethnic Chinese Bruneian Prefect. During the year, two Christian churches were given permission to repair and expand premises on safety grounds. However, two Christian groups were denied permission to register, which is required by law to worship communally.

Non-Muslims who proselytize may be arrested or detained, and possibly held without charges for an extended period of time. As an example, in December 2000 the Government used the ISA to detain at least seven Christians, two of whom were converts from Islam, for allegedly subversive activities. Three detainees, Malai Taufick bin Haji Mashor, Awang Yunus bin Marang, and Mohd Freddie Chong bin Abdullah, were released in October 2001, after spending 9 months in detention. There were credible reports that one of the Christian detainees, Taufick, was tortured and beaten during his first month of detention, while a second was subjected to intense psychological pressure to return to Islam. When released, Taufick was placed under 1-year house arrest. A second detainee, Yunus, was not permitted to speak in public or travel outside of the country. Government officials maintained that the detentions were security-related (see Section 1.d.).

The Government routinely censored magazine articles on other faiths, blacking out or removing photographs of crucifixes and other Christian religious symbols during the year. In addition, government officials prevented the public display, distribution, and sale of items featuring non-Islamic religious symbols.

The authorities conducted raids sporadically on clubs frequented by foreign residents and foreign workers to confiscate alcohol and foodstuffs that were not prepared in accordance with "halal" requirements (the Islamic requirements for the slaughter of animals and the prohibition on inclusion of pork products in any food). The authorities also increased raids on karaoke establishments operating without a license.

The Ministry of Education requires courses on Islam or the national ideology, the Malay Muslim monarchy, and prohibits the teaching of other religions. The Ministry requires that all students, including non-Muslims, follow a course of study on the Islamic faith and learn Arabic script. The International School of Brunei and the Jerudong International School are exempt from these requirements. Private Christian schools were not allowed to give Christian instruction and were required to give instruction on Islam. However, the Government did not prohibit or restrict parents from giving religious instruction to children in their own homes. In 2000, the Government responded to objections from parents and religious leaders and set aside tentative plans to require more Islamic courses in private, non-Islamic parochial schools.

The Government requires residents to carry an identity card that states the bearer's religion. Visitors to the country are asked to identify their religion on their landing cards.

For a more detailed discussion see the [2003 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The Government restricts the movement of former political prisoners during the first year of their release. Generally the Government does not restrict the freedom of movement of its citizens, visitors, and permanent residents. Government employees, both citizens and foreigners working on a contractual basis, must apply for approval to go abroad, which was granted routinely.

No legal provision exists for granting temporary refuge or refugee status to those seeking such refuge or asylum. Under the law, persons arriving without valid entry documents and means of support are considered illegal immigrants and are refused entry. There were no reported cases of individuals seeking temporary refuge during the year.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Citizens did not have the right to peacefully change their government. Under the continuing state of emergency, there is no parliament, and political authority and control rests entirely with the Sultan. Members of the Sultan's appointed Cabinet serve as his principal advisors.

Individuals sought to express their views or to influence government decisions and policies by writing letters to a local newspaper or by petitioning the Sultan or handing him letters when he appears in public (see Section 2.a.).

The country has attempted to institutionalize a form of popular representation based on a traditional system of village chiefs who are elected by secret ballot by all adults. Candidates must be approved by the Government and must be Malay. These leaders are expected to communicate constituents' wishes through a variety of channels, including periodic meetings chaired by the Home Affairs Minister, with several officials appointed by the Sultan. Regular meetings between senior government officials and "Mukim" (a group of villages) representatives allowed for airing of local grievances and concerns. In 2000, the Foreign Minister confirmed that a review of the Constitution was submitted to the Sultan for approval, and that "an element of an election" was in this report. However, at year's end, there had been no word on when the revised Constitution might be forthcoming.

The lack of a representative, democratic government seriously limited the role of both men and women in government and politics, although women were limited to a greater extent. There are no women ministers in the Government, although the Sultan's sister, Princess Masna, was the second ranking official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and there were women ambassadors, judges, and other senior officials.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

The Consumers' Association of Brunei (CAB), established in 2002, attempted to address human rights but was impeded by the Government from doing so. Beginning in May 2002, the CAB publicized poor working and living conditions of foreign workers involved in protest work stoppages (see Section 6.e.), the organization received a letter from the Commissioner of Police requesting CAB to show reason why it should not be deregistered for exceeding its mandate, which primarily focused on consumer rights. Senior CAB members were reportedly subjected to surveillance. The Association was able to show evidence of its mandate to address workers' rights, but subsequently the local media did not publicize the association's activities.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution does not contain specific provisions prohibiting discrimination based on race, sex, disability, language, and social status.

Women

The extent of spousal abuse is unknown. During the year, cases of abuse occurred, although specific figures were not available. The criminal penalty for a minor domestic assault is 1 to 2 weeks in jail and a fine. An assault resulting in serious injury is punishable by caning and a longer jail sentence.

A special unit, staffed by female officers, existed within the police department to investigate domestic abuse and child abuse complaints. A hotline was in service for persons to report domestic violence. The Ministry of Culture's Social Affairs Services (SAS) Unit provided counseling for women and their spouses. During the year, approximately 18 female domestic abuse victims were sheltered at the Taman Noor Hidayah, a shelter run by the SAS unit.

According to press reports, the female victims were restricted to the shelter while waiting for their cases to be brought to court. The reports increased pressure on the shelter residents to leave the shelter and drop charges to avoid social stigma.

Islamic courts, staffed by both male and female officials, offered counseling to married couples in domestic violence cases. Officials did not encourage wives to reconcile with flagrantly abusive spouses, and the Islamic courts recognized assault as grounds for divorce.

Female domestic servants, most of whom were foreign workers (see Sections 6.c., 6.e., and 6.f.), were also subjected to abuse. While the level of violence in society generally was low, the beating of servants--or refusing them the right to leave the house on days off, sometimes on grounds that they "might encounter the wrong company"--was more prevalent. Since most foreign female domestics were highly dependent on their employers, those subject to abuse often were unwilling or unable to bring complaints, either to the authorities or to their governments' embassies. However, when such complaints were brought, the Government generally was quick to investigate allegations of abuse and impose fines and punishment as warranted. Several workers settled assault cases out of court with their employers. One foreign embassy maintained a shelter for domestics involved in disputes with employers and was active in protecting their citizens' rights.

Prostitution is illegal. Women entering the country for purposes of prostitution generally were tried, sentenced, and deported swiftly (see Section 6.f.).

In accordance with certain Islamic traditions, women are denied equal status with men in a number of important areas such as divorce, inheritance, and custody of children. In 2002, an amendment to the nationality law permitted female citizens to pass their nationality on to their children.

Although men are eligible for permanent positions in government service whether or not they hold university degrees, women without university degrees are eligible to hold government positions only on a month-to-month basis. While some previous inequities have been eliminated, women in month-to-month positions received slightly less annual leave and fewer allowances than their male and female counterparts in permanent positions.

There were no separate pay scales for men and women, and in recent years there has been a major influx of women into the workforce. Women served in a wide variety of capacities in the police and armed forces. The number of female university graduates increased, and nearly two-thirds of the national university's entering class was female.

Religious authorities strongly encouraged Muslim women to wear the "tudong," a traditional head covering, and most women did so. Most government departments and the uniformed services require female Muslims and non-Muslims to wear the tudong as part of their dress code. All government schools, as well as the national university and other educational institutions, also pressured non-Muslim students to wear the tudong as part of these institutions' uniform.

The 1999 Married Women's Law significantly improved the rights of non-Muslim married women with respect to maintenance, property, and domestic violence. The 1999 changes to the Islamic Family Law (particularly in regard to Women's Position in Marriage and Divorce) facilitated divorce proceedings for women and permitted women to retain the family home after their divorce.

Children

No statistics were published regarding the welfare of children. The strong commitment to family values within society, the high standard of living, and government funding for children's welfare provided most children a healthy and nurturing environment. Education is free, compulsory, and universal for the first 9 years; after which, it is still free but no longer compulsory. With a few exceptions, involving small villages in extremely remote areas, nutritional standards were high, and poverty was almost unknown. Medical care for all citizens, including children, was subsidized heavily and widely available. Approximately 20 young female rape and sexual abuse victims, between 9 and 15 years of age, were housed at the government-sponsored Taman Noor Hidayah women's shelter. The penalty for the rape of a minor is imprisonment for from 8 to 30 years and caning with not less than 12 strokes.

Persons with Disabilities

The law does not mandate accessibility or other assistance for persons with disabilities. The Government attempted to provide educational services for children with disabilities, although these efforts were not up to international norms.

Indigenous People

Indigenous people comprised 6 percent of the population; they were integrated into society, and enjoyed the same rights as other citizens.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

There are a sizeable number of "stateless" persons and permanent residents, mostly ethnic Chinese, including those born and raised in the country, who were not automatically accorded citizenship and its attendant rights. They had to travel abroad as stateless persons and did not enjoy the full privileges of citizenship, including the right to own land. Stateless persons and permanent residents also are not entitled to subsidized medical care. In June, a reform to the nationality law allowed some older, stateless persons and some permanent residents over age 50 to acquire citizenship by passing an oral rather than a written nationality test. All stateless persons and permanent residents became entitled to free education at government schools and other vocational and technical institutions.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

Trade unions are legal and independent but must be registered with the Government. All workers, including civil servants other than those serving in the military and those working as prison guards or police officers, may form or join trade unions. However, in practice there was no union activity in the country. The three registered trade unions were all in the oil sector, had a total membership of less than 5 percent of that industry's work force, and were inactive. There were over 80,000 foreign workers in the country, including almost 20 thousand garment industry workers, none of whom are members of any trade union.

The law permits the formation of trade union federations but forbids affiliation with international labor organizations. The country

has ratified none of the ILO's eight Fundamental Conventions.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Since there was no union activity in the country, questions of government interference in union matters and employer discrimination against union members did not arise. There is no legal foundation for collective bargaining, and strikes are illegal. Wage and benefit packages were based on market conditions.

There is a free trade zone in Muara Port, known as the Muara Export Zone (MEZ). The labor laws are fully applicable in the MEZ.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Bonded Labor

The law prohibits forced or bonded labor, including by children; however, there were reports that some foreign domestic workers worked under conditions that resembled bondage (see Section 6.e.). Other workers, most notably in the garment industry, signed contracts with employment agents or other sponsors in their home countries that reduced their promised salaries through payments to the agencies, or sponsors. In response, the Government forbade wage deductions to agencies or sponsors and mandated that employees receive their full salaries.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

Various laws prohibit the employment of children under the age of 16. Parental consent and approval by the Labor Commission is required for those under the age of 18. Females under age 18 may not work at night or on offshore oil platforms. The Department of Labor (DOL), which is a part of the Ministry of Home Affairs, effectively enforced laws on the employment of children. There were no reports of violations of the child labor laws.

The Government adheres to the standards of ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Due to the ongoing economic downturn and reduced government hiring, unemployment has grown in recent years. However, most citizens who had employment still commanded good salaries. There is no minimum wage. The standard workweek is Monday through Thursday and Saturday, with Friday and Sunday off, allowing for two 24-hour rest periods each week. Overtime is paid for work in excess of 48 hours per week, and double time is paid for work performed on legal holidays. Occupational health and safety standards are established by government regulations. The DOL inspected working conditions on a routine basis and in response to complaints. The DOL generally enforced labor regulations effectively. However, enforcement in the unskilled labor sector was lax, especially for foreign laborers. The DOL may close any workplace where health, safety, or working conditions are unsatisfactory, and it has done so. The law permits a worker to leave a hazardous job site without jeopardizing his employment, but generally this did not occur.

At least 80,000 foreign nationals worked in the country. There were reports of foreign maids and other domestic workers who worked exceptionally long hours, did not have a rest day, and whose liberty was severely restricted. There also were isolated reports of employers physically beating domestic employees or not providing them with adequate food. The Government prosecuted some such cases.

Government protective measures for foreign workers included arrival briefings for workers, inspections of facilities, and a telephone hotline for worker complaints. Government mediation continued to be most commonly used to resolve labor disputes. Abusive employers also faced criminal and civil penalties. When grievances cannot be resolved, repatriation of foreign workers is at the expense of the employer, and all outstanding wages must be paid. The majority of abuse cases were settled out of court by the payment of financial compensation to the maid by the errant employer.

f. Trafficking in Persons

Brunei has been a destination country for persons trafficked for labor and sexual exploitation. A statute outlaws sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls, and a variety of other laws, primarily those related to prostitution and the protection of minors, could be applied against sex traffickers. However, authorities only rarely investigated and prosecuted sex traffickers, particularly when the victims were foreigners. Immigration, labor, and religious regulations could deter trafficking, but were unevenly implemented. The Government has tightened regulations and enforcement to deter labor traffickers and improved its record in protecting foreign trafficking victims.

Most trafficking occurred in the labor context, as foreign workers were recruited from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh for work in the garment industries, agriculture, and as domestic servants. There were also a small number of cases of trafficking in women for purposes of sexual exploitation.

While there was awareness among senior officials of the criminal aspects of trafficking in persons for labor and prostitution,

there was inadequate understanding of these issues at the operational and enforcement level. There were no awareness programs to educate the public or specific training for government officials on trafficking. In broad preventive measures not specific to trafficking, the Government provided a wide range of social and educational services to citizens, which reduced their vulnerability to trafficking. The Government provided funds for shelters that serviced only citizens and permanent residents, who were rarely the victims of trafficking.

Some embassies provided protection services, including temporary shelter, for workers involved in disputes with employers.